

Leisure

Cycling

Saddle up for summer

SUMMER is here, and what better way to enjoy the sunshine and local scenery than by getting out on your bike?!

Long haul transport...

Following on from the huge success of the 'Beeston to Colston Bassett' run in May, Rural Rides has organised a similar ride, but one with a twist.

Two groups will set off from Beeston Square on Saturday, August 6. For those who have been inspired by this year's 'Tour de France' and want to test their legs, there will be a longer, faster ride of about 45 miles. The challenge is to catch the second, slower group taking a shorter route

– 28 miles – in time for lunch. The shorter option is designed for those who want to enjoy the unique freedom of spinning along country lanes without the sensation of burning legs or lungs!

Meet in Beeston Square 9am. Contact Mark on 07817 101 602 for more details.

Or in for the short haul?

If a relaxed, companionable 'bike stroll' appeals more, then join the Rural Ride from Attenborough station on August 14. This ride will meander along quiet tracks and waterside trails with frequent stops en route to chat and discover the wealth of local history.

Meet at Attenborough station at 9.30am. Contact

Gary on 07860 311 412 for more details.

Other rides

Sunday, August 7

Meet at Wilford toll bridge at 10.30am for a ride to the donkey sanctuary

Wednesday, August 10 and Wednesday, August 17

Meet at Christchurch, Chilwell, at 12 noon for an easy ride

Saturday, August 20

Meet at Bramcote Hills car park at 10am for a ride along the Erewash Valley Trail

For more details about the rides, call (0115) 955 2288 or go to www.ridewise.org.uk/rural-rides

Softball

Beavers win Bragging Rights

A FIERCELY contested match between the Beeston Beavers and the Alea Alleycats, both of Broxtowe Softball Club, signalled the end of the first part of the softball season, where the league is split into two divisions representing the top and bottom teams.

The teams met for the hotly anticipated inter-club derby match in the East Midlands Softball League towards the end of June. It proved a close game until the sixth inning, with the score 14-11 in favour of the Beavers. However, the Beavers then went on to score five runs in the sixth inning and six runs in the seventh inning. The Alleycats managed just three runs in response. The game finished 25-14 after both teams had put in some excellent performances.

The top division beckoned for the Beavers, whilst the Alleycats were joined by a newly formed third team from Broxtowe Softball Club, the Broxtowe Badgers, in the bottom division.

Beaver away...

The Beeston Beavers went on to start their top division season with a match against the Tigers on June 30. This was an extremely tight match, ultimately decided by five runs scored by the Beavers in the final two innings.

Special mention must be given to two Beavers players, home-run hitting Colette Gardner and Jason Smith, who were named the most valuable players.

Unfortunately the next two games played by the Beavers, against the Pyros (15-16) and

Sheriffs of Nottingham (4-21) were both losses.

Alleycats skulking in the shadows

The Alleycats lost the two games played so far this season, the first loss coming against the Redbacks (20-9), which was followed by a fall to the Pyros Cubs (20-16). A strong sixth inning against the Pyros Cubs, in which they scored 11 runs, still wasn't enough to pull them through.

The Broxtowe Badgers won their opening game against Leicester Royals – a good way for a new team to start in a new league!

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

Firing the woodfuel debate

THE inclusion of heat from burning woodland timber in the government's recently announced Renewable Heat Incentive scheme, and the support for this in the Forestry Commission's 'Woodfuel Strategy', has rung alarm bells amongst some conservationists.

In an age where part of the justification of the support for onshore wind farms is their lack of carbon emissions, it seems incongruous that the Government should be supporting a fuel use which releases plenty of carbon not only in the form of CO₂ but also as particulates – a potential backward step for air quality.

The premise behind the Woodfuel Strategy is that many of Britain's woodlands are "under managed". This in effect means broadleaf woodland and areas of conifer

plantations are usually already under some kind of active management.

Although this strategy concentrates on the commercial possibilities of woodfuel, it does also claim benefits to wildlife stating:

"Lack of management is contributing to a decline in the biodiversity of our woodlands. Increasing the level of ecologically sensitive management would help a range of flora and fauna This will help deliver the England Biodiversity Strategy and associated national and international biodiversity targets."

On enhancing sustainable forestry and protecting our ancient woodland it assures:

"The strategy supports the Government's 'Keepers of Time' policy for our ancient and native woodlands and international sustainability standards for forestry.

Woodland biodiversity will benefit substantially, particularly from the diversification of woodland structure."

But it is not long before the business side breaks into the biodiversity section:

"An enhanced market for wood will ensure the delivery of the recently revised Habitat Action Plan targets for native woodland. A revitalised woodland sector and biomass market is a vital complement to the rural development funding that will fund some, but not all, of the necessary management."

The first two statements contain a great deal of truth. It was traditional woodland management methods such as rotational coppicing that provided the habitats which allowed the wildlife mentioned above to thrive. Their virtual abandonment has been a major cause of its decline. Re-instatement of these methods is an important tool in managing, particularly ancient, woodland for wildlife but they often need to include measures to keep out one particular kind of wildlife – deer! Deer have always posed a problem for those managing woodlands, with some ancient woodlands being surrounded by man-made ditches and earthworks to keep them out. The modern equivalent for

areas of woodland being managed for wildlife is extensive (and expensive) stretches of deer-proof fencing.

All species of deer in Britain use woodlands as part of their habitat to some extent. As well as providing a degree of protection against their natural predators they can also provide feeding opportunities. The best of these can be in areas that have recently been felled as would occur with coppicing. Deer can browse off both the ground flora, which has developed as the canopy is opened up, and the shoots of the regenerating trees. If this is allowed to happen, not only

would the hoped for benefits to wildlife fail to materialise, but the long-term future of the woodland could be threatened. The concept of forestry wood as a 'sustainable heat source', which already requires the ability to look well into the future, would then be even harder to swallow.

The need for 'ecologically sensitive management' in woodlands being used as a source of woodfuel should be obvious, but how many management plans will include costly measures to protect newly felled areas of woodland if the product is only firewood? Some might consider that the

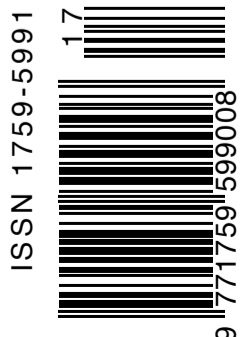
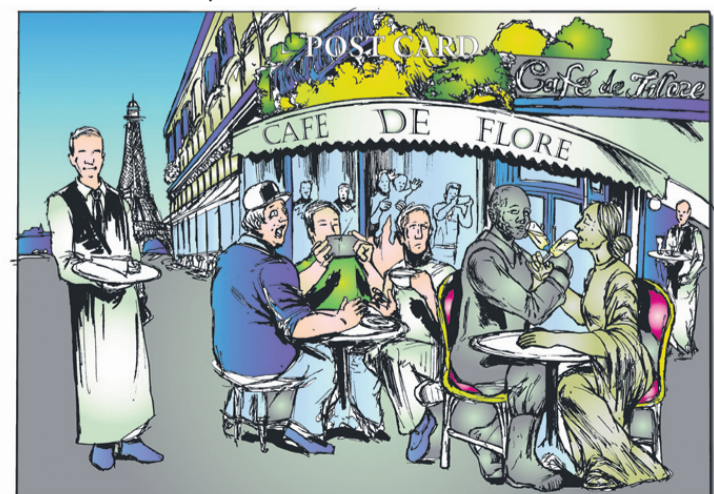
woodfuel strategy risks making this firewood a legitimate crop to be harvested from our woodlands and that, unless this can be done in a way that consistently increases their value to wildlife, it would be better left where it is.

Management of woodlands would be much easier but for the sheer numbers of deer. Such beautiful and loved creatures make unlikely villains but are they now going to let another of our favourite animals 'take the rap' and face execution?

Find out next time!

Jack Smith
Local ecologist

The Beekeeper



Thought for the Fortnight

Sociology is the study of people who do not need to be studied by people who do.

E S Turner